

Dorchester 1793
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THE INSPIRED SCRIPTURE AN ADEQUATE RULE OF FAITH
AND PRACTICE, ILLUSTRATED IN

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S E R M O N,

PREACHED OCTOBER 23, 1793,

AT THE

O R D I N A T I O N

O F

MR. THADDEUS MASON HARRIS,

TO THE PASTORAL CARE OF THE CHURCH AND CHRISTIAN
SOCIETY IN

D O R C H E S T E R.

—♦♦♦♦♦—
By SAMUEL KENDAL, A. M. *K*

—♦♦♦♦♦—
PASTOR OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH AND
SOCIETY IN WESTON.



Printed at the Apollo Press, in BOSTON,

By BELKNAP AND HALL,

No. 8, Dock Square.—1794.

THE HISTORY OF THE
AND THE HISTORY OF THE

A
S E R M O N

PREACHED OCTOBER 22, 1800

AT THE

ORDINATION

OF

MR. THADDEUS MASON

TO THE PASTORAL CHAIR OF THE CHURCH OF THE
SOCIETY

DORCHESTER

—

BY SAMUEL R. MASON

PASTOR OF THE CHURCH OF THE
SOCIETY



Printed by the Quaker Press, in Boston

By BELKNAP AND HALL

No. 8, DORSET SQUARE

DEDICATION.

TO the Reverend THADDEUS MASON HARRIS, *at whose desire the following Discourse was preached; and to the respectable CHURCH of CHRIST in Dorchester under his pastoral care, at whose particular request, and expense, it is published; with fervent prayers to the FATHER of mercies for their prosperity and happiness, and for their mutual joy and comfort, in their present connexion; it is now humbly and affectionately dedicated by*

THE AUTHOR.

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AN
ORDINATION
SERMON.

2 TIMOTHY iii. 16, 17.

ALL SCRIPTURE IS GIVEN BY INSPIRATION OF GOD, AND IS PROFITABLE FOR DOCTRINE, FOR REPROOF, FOR CORRECTION, FOR INSTRUCTION IN RIGHTEOUSNESS;

THAT THE MAN OF GOD MAY BE PERFECT, THOROUGHLY FURNISHED UNTO ALL GOOD WORKS.

THE Apostle Paul, in his epistles to Timothy and Titus, hath concisely described the character and qualifications of a gospel minister; and pointed out the principal duties of his office.

Sincerity, faithfulness, and ability to teach, are leading traits in the character, and necessary qualifications, of a *gospel bishop*. All others are, perhaps, comprehended in these. He, who possesses these, cannot be a stranger to the transforming power of the religion which he preaches. He must be actuated by right motives; by love to the Redeemer and to the souls of men; and will be diligent in his exertions to fulfil his ministry, and to accomplish the benevolent design of the institution.

Good natural and acquired abilities, as well as experimental knowledge, are necessary, in order that he may be qualified to teach others the sublime truths, doctrines, and duties, of religion. His duty is, among other things, to *instruct, reprove, rebuke, warn, exhort*, and “in Christ’s stead,” to *persuade* sinners to be *reconciled unto God*. That he may be successful, and shew himself to be worthy of the sacred office, he must be *an example of the believer in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity*; and must “take heed to his doctrine, that it be according to godliness;” of a practical tendency; and “shew uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity.”

He must not amuse himself, nor his hearers, with “foolish and unlearned questions, fables, and commandments of men, which turn from the truth;” but deliver the messages of heaven; the doctrines contained in the *divinely inspired scripture*. His heart and life must accord with the precepts and purity of the gospel, and be governed by the examples of his blessed master; and all his powers must be exerted to promote the glory of God in the salvation of sinners; to advance the Redeemer’s cause and kingdom in the world.

This, as it was the gracious design of Christ in instituting the gospel ministry; so it is the prime object of every faithful minister. Those, who take upon themselves this office, depart from the original design of it, when they are chiefly actuated by any other motive, than a view to the glory of God and to the good of men.

This was the chief motive by which the first ministers of Christ were actuated. St. Paul, in particular, hath furnished us with an example of the purest zeal, faithfulness, and constancy, in his labors to promote the honor of his master and the salvation of sinners. And he endeavoured to inspire Timothy, "his own son in the faith," with a like zeal and fidelity in the work of the ministry.

In his second epistle to this young *evangelist*, after advertising him of the sufferings which he might expect to experience in the cause of Christ; and of the apostacy and declension which then began to appear in the church, and which, probably, were to be attributed to their "receiving for doctrines the commandments of men;" he exhorted him to "continue in the things which he had learned, and been assured of, knowing of whom he had learned them; and that from a child he had known the holy scriptures, which were able to make him wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

By "the things which he had learned, and been assured of," the apostle, doubtless, intended the great doctrines and duties of christianity; in which he knew Timothy had been well instructed. And, that Timothy might view the holy scriptures in their just importance, pay a sacred regard to their authority, and consider them as an *adequate rule* of faith and practice, abundantly sufficient to *furnish the man of God*, or minister of Christ, with a competent knowledge of the doctrines and duties of christianity, for the faithful and successful discharge of his

office, the apostle introduced the words of our text: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

It may be worthy of particular notice, that the apostle, after describing the character, and pointing out the necessary qualifications, of a minister, which show that he must be a man of real religion, *sincere, faithful, able, and apt to teach*, directed him to the *divinely inspired scripture*, as the standard of truth, the fountain of doctrinal knowledge, and the rule of ministerial duty.

This divine standard of religious truth and rule of faith and practice, as the *polar star* in the christian system, is to regulate the sentiments, the faith, and the conduct of both minister and people. It is adapted to the state and capacity of mankind in general; and was given for their "instruction in righteousness;" for their improvement and perfection in faith, knowledge, and christian virtue.

But the text, however extensive in its design and general in its application, I conceive, is peculiarly well adapted to the present occasion; and worthy of the serious attention of those, who sustain, or are about to take upon themselves, the pastoral office.

In pursuing the subject it may be proper,

I. To make a few remarks upon the divine inspiration of the scripture.

We shall not labor to prove, that the scriptures contain a revelation from heaven. This

we may take for granted, on an occasion, like the present, when we are, in the most public manner, testifying our belief in divine revelation, and acting under its authority.

But it may be a question, whether we are to consider every part of the bible as given by inspiration of God, and the expressions of it dictated by the Holy Ghost.

Not to decide upon this point, it is obvious to remark, that the text, as it stands in the original, admits of this construction: *All scripture given by inspiration of God, or the whole divinely inspired scripture, is profitable for doctrine,* &c.* This interpretation, which men of candor and critical knowledge, allow to be agreeable to the original, will remove those difficulties, which arise in the mind, from the one given in our translation.

* Dr. Doddridge, in a note upon the text, says, "Grotius translates the words, *the whole divinely inspired scripture is profitable, &c.*" and does himself allow that they will bear this construction; though he thinks they are rendered more *literally* in our translation. In "an illustration of the New Testament by notes and explications, printed for R. Goadby," the author insists that the interpretation above given is the true sense of the passage. He says, "It is to be noted that our Translators here supplied the verb *is*, which greatly alters the sense here; and when that happens to be the case, no word ought by any means to be supplied; for the greatest errors may be built upon the scriptures by this means. The true rendering of the words here is; *All scripture given by inspiration of God (or divinely inspired) is profitable for doctrine, &c.* For the word AND is not found in the MS. called *Barb. I.* nor in Clemens of Alexandria, nor in the Vulgar, Syriac, and Arabic versions, nor in Ambrose; nor in the Scholiast, which goes under the name of Jerome; nor in Theodorus Mopsuensis, nor in Pelagius and others." If we admit that the word AND was not originally in the text, the natural construction is, *All scripture given by inspiration of God is profitable, &c.* which is a very different thing, from saying that *all scripture IS given by inspiration of God*, and according to which the apostle's words are as applicable to the inspired part of the *New*, as to any part of the *Old Testament*, to which he is thought to have had particular reference.

Learned and serious christians have supposed, that by insisting upon the divine inspiration of every part of our scriptures, and that the expressions were dictated by the Holy Ghost, we lessen the credibility of revelation. To preserve the purity of revelation thus given, the translators must be guided by the spirit of inspiration; otherwise the language of the Holy Ghost will be changed into the language of men. Besides, it is conceived that the knowledge and communication of many facts recorded in scripture did not require inspiration; and, therefore, that it would not reflect any honor on God to say they were given by inspiration.

Not to determine any question about spurious books; or interpolated passages in those which are genuine, and *given by inspiration of God*; it is evident that many parts of scripture are mere matters of record: in the writing of which the truth might be preserved without any extraordinary agency of the spirit of God. Other parts are to be considered as a faithful and true history of revelation, which the several writers gave, probably, in their own language.*

* "The penmen of the sacred scriptures," says Augustinus, "wrote some things as they were *men* with historical care and diligence; other things they wrote as *prophets* by inspiration from God: the former for the bettering of knowledge, the latter for the confirming of religion. This then may satisfy us that *all* that was written by the prophets, and even by those holy men, who were authors of some part of the bible, was not divine; because they wrote some things not as inspired persons, but as more historians."

Augustinus de civitate Dei, Lib. 18, chap. 38.

Dr. Benson, in "an essay concerning inspiration," has nearly the same idea. St. Mark and St. Luke, he supposes, did not write "by immediate *inspiration*," but from that knowledge of facts, which they had otherwise obtained; and that their writings were examined and approved by St. Peter, Paul, and other *inspired apostles*; and are, therefore, stamped with apostolic authority.

Whether the expressions of those, who wrote by inspiration, were, *generally*, dictated by the Holy Ghost, is a question.

The great difference of style used by the several writers, when treating upon the same subjects, is thought to favor the opinion, that they were left to dress and communicate divinely revealed truths in their own language, and to reason upon them in their own way. Against this opinion it may be alleged, that St. Paul, alluding to the truths of which he had received the knowledge by revelation, or inspiration, says 1 Cor. ii. 13. "Which things also we speak, not in the words which *man's* wisdom teacheth, but which the *Holy Ghost* teacheth;" and that St. Peter says "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the *Holy Ghost*."

On the other hand it may be said, that the apostle Paul gives notice, in some instances, that he speaks of himself, and not from the Lord.*

It would be too assuming in me to pretend to determine how far the language and expressions of scripture were dictated by the Holy

* "As to the apostles themselves," the last mentioned author supposes that by *inspiration* they had a complete knowledge of the christian system, and says, "Whenever they spoke or wrote concerning *christianity*, that *fund of revelation* kept them right. But they were *reasonable creatures*, as well as *inspired apostles*; and, therefore, could speak, or write about common affairs, as men, that have the use of their reason, without any *inspiration*, can easily do. St. Paul therefore, without any *inspiration* could give such a direction, as this to *Timothy*, viz. *to mix a little wine with the water which he drank*," &c. After mentioning a number of similar instances, he adds, "this account of the matter is not mine, but St. Paul's. 1 Cor. vii. 10. *This* (says he) *the Lord commandeth*; and not I. And ver. 12. *But to the rest speak I; not the Lord*," &c.

Benson's paraphrase and notes, &c. vol. I. page 327.

Ghost. The certainty, perfection, and authority of revelation, do not, perhaps, depend on any decision which may be had upon this point. All believers in the inspiration of scripture will readily grant, that some of the writers of the New Testament, at least, were miraculously endued with the gift of tongues, or languages, and that all were every way well qualified to communicate to the world the knowledge of truths revealed from heaven.

Although these truths might not, in general, be expressed in words "which the Holy Ghost teacheth;" yet we must suppose that the sacred historians were so far under the special direction of heaven as to be preserved from every error which might materially affect the system of religion which they were employed to publish to the world.

It may be considered as the height of absurdity, to suppose that God designed to make a revelation of his will to men, and to introduce among them a new system of religion; and yet that He chose and employed improper instruments to effect his own purpose.

Such an idea does not reflect any great honor upon Christ, the glorious *Head* of the church, who commissioned the apostles to go and teach a doctrine which he said was not *his*, but the *Father's*, who had sent him into the world.

Whatever different sentiments may be entertained upon the subject of revelation, those, who believe the scriptures to be a revelation of God's will, should be cautious that they do not enervate their force and lessen their authority, by ranking them with, or reducing them be-

low, merely human composition. They evidently have the seal of heaven affixed on them; they have the *indelible* marks of *divine inspiration*; and they were given in a way, and are in themselves, most wisely and happily adapted to the state of mankind.

The design of revelation is, to inform the human mind, and to communicate truths which unassisted reason could never have discovered. It must, therefore, be addressed to the understanding of mankind; and the contents of it be received *only* from a conviction of their truth.

We now observe,

II. That we are to determine, by the light of our own understanding, what are scripture doctrines; and to receive them upon the authority of a divine testimony.

It is by the exercise of our mental faculties only, that we can determine what doctrines are contained in the holy oracles; or that the *scripture was given by the inspiration of God*. Having examined the evidences, and admitted the truth of christianity, and assented that the scriptures do contain a revelation from heaven; it is then for each one to determine, for himself, what are the doctrines of revelation.

And, upon the authority of a *divine testimony*, we may safely believe any doctrine, whether we fully comprehend it or not.

Though it should exceed human comprehension, this is no just objection against the truth of it. And even though it should appear to be contrary to our reason, this will not justify a disbelief of it; provided it be supported,

evidently, by a divine testimony. We are not to reject any doctrine which, evidently, is contained in the *divinely inspired scripture*, upon the authority of our own reason; or because we cannot see the reasonableness of it. But, “the inspiration of the Almighty hath given us understanding;” and this must be convinced, that it is a doctrine of revelation, before it can be received as such, and the truth of it admitted.

It is the proper business of faith, to rest assured of the truth of whatever God hath revealed in his word; and it is the province of reason, to determine what is revealed. As by the light of the understanding we discover the principles of natural religion; so by it we must judge of the import of every message from heaven. It is the apparent reasonableness of the thing, which leads a man to embrace any principle in natural religion; but the authority of the divine word ought to establish in his mind the truth of any doctrine of revelation.

How far doctrines, which are repugnant to our reason, and inconsistent, according to our conception, with the moral perfections of God, may weaken, or invalidate the evidence that “the scripture is given by inspiration of God,” is a question not now to be discussed. But, admitting the *divine origin* of the scripture, the doctrines of it certainly claim our full belief.

The purity and reasonableness of scripture doctrines may very justly be considered as an internal evidence, that they were *given by inspiration of God*. And great strength of evi-

dence in support of christianity arises from the purity and reasonableness of its doctrines.

The christian religion includes the essential principles of natural religion, as a part of its own system ; and must, therefore, admit, and even require, the exercise of those powers, by which men gain the knowledge of these principles.

But the *peculiar* doctrines of christianity, when we have learnt what they are, by the exercise of our own understanding upon the word of God, are to be received upon the authority of the divine testimony. Our sentiments in revealed religion cannot be safely formed by any other rule than the scripture ; nor by this in any other way, than the proper exercise of our *own* understanding.

A rule of judging supposes a power of judging, and the exertion of that power in the application of the rule. And the right of judging for ourselves is unalienable ; cannot be relinquished without opposing the first principles of all religion. It is our right and our duty to interpret the scripture according to the light we have ; and the exercise of this right cannot, in justice, bring upon us the censure and uncharitableness of our brethren, who enjoy and improve the same natural right and christian liberty.

To understand the sense of scripture, and to form a just idea of the doctrines of it, careful attention is requisite. Various circumstances are to be considered ; the situation of the writers, to whom they wrote, the occasion of their writing, their general design at the time, must

be taken into view, in order to understand the true import of what is written. An acquaintance with Eastern customs, with idiomatical and proverbial expressions, with metaphors and figures of speech, and, especially, with the languages in which the scriptures were originally written, will greatly assist in judging of the doctrines therein contained. Besides, we must "compare spiritual things with spiritual," or one part of scripture with another, and with the general design of the whole, in order to ascertain the sense of several passages. In these, it is easy to see, the understanding must be exercised; and every man's sentiments, if he have any, must be the result of his own inquiry and judgment.

Full faith is due to every divine testimony; but may not be due to a particular interpretation of scripture. In the nature of things we must be satisfied with the interpretation, before we can receive the sentiment as scriptural and just. Christ and his apostles have borne witness to the truth of this sentiment. Jesus directed the Jews to "search the scriptures;" and the writer of the *Acts* of the apostles commended the *Bereans* because they searched them, to know the truth of what they heard.

We now proceed to say,

III. That the "divinely inspired scripture" is an adequate rule of christian faith and practice, independent on all human inventions.

Few will deny the perfection of the scriptures, as a rule of faith; though they may not acknowledge the sufficiency of any man's rea-

son, except their own, to understand them; and may think their interpretation deserves as full credit as the divine word.

But the perfection of scripture, as a rule of faith and duty, consists in part, at least, in its being adapted to the human understanding; and in expressing essential truths with great clearness. It is not a revelation to those who cannot understand what it contains. In every instance in which it requires human inventions to supply a deficiency, it loses the authority of a divine revelation; unless a divine commission be granted to the authors of such inventions: which would be giving an additional revelation that might equally require an explanation.

But, apart from all such considerations, St. Paul says, "the gospel, is the power of God unto salvation;" and assures Timothy that the "holy scriptures are able to make him wise unto salvation;" that they are "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness;" that is, in few words, they are a complete rule of christian faith and practice. And he expressly charged him not to "give heed to fables and commandments of men, which," he says, "turn from the truth;" and which, it is very certain, have been a fruitful source of error, and have done great injury to the cause of religion.

The scriptures contain the whole christian system; the doctrines to be believed, and the duties to be performed. The principal and most essential doctrines, it will, perhaps, be generally agreed, are *doctrines of grace*. These, as they are taught in the inspired word, could not have

been discovered by the light of reason. The knowledge of them is communicated by revelation. And it must be granted, that it was the design of God to make them known by the scripture, or by the spirit of inspiration, under whose influence and guidance the scripture was given. These doctrines must, therefore, be supposed to be clearly revealed; and not left to be spelt out by the uncertain reasonings of fallible men. The knowledge, or belief of them, does not depend upon long deductions, or subtil arguments, invented by "man's wisdom." As some propositions are self-evident, so certain revealed truths are clear and comprehensible; and as readily acknowledged, upon the authority of revelation, as any self-evident proposition is, upon the authority, or by the light, of the human understanding.

All the essential doctrines of christianity are, perhaps, thus clearly revealed.

They are, at least, I conceive, so plainly expressed that they may easily be known and understood by every honest inquirer. For the man, therefore, of honest integrity and unfeigned sincerity, a lover of God and of the truth, the scripture must be a perfect rule of faith and practice.

To deny this, is, in my apprehension, to contradict St. Paul and to cast reproach upon the divine author of revelation. For, to suppose any truth, the knowledge or belief of which is essential to salvation, is not so clearly revealed that it may be perceived and understood by a sincere inquirer of the most moderate capacity, is virtually saying, that God hath not adapted

the revelation of his will to the state of mankind; and that the scripture is not "able to make us wise unto salvation."

But what is gained by calling in human inventions to our aid? These are generally fathered upon the scripture as their foundation; though, in many instances, it must be confessed, without much appearance of truth. But, if the scripture be not a perfect and adequate rule of faith, what claim to perfection has any creed, pretended to be formed by it? If it be an adequate rule of faith for any one man, or body of men, why not for another? Or why should those, who in the sincerity of their hearts, govern their faith by the same rule, be charged with *damnable* heresy? Is the goodness and piety of their hearts, or their faith in revelation, to be determined by any particular construction of the contents of revelation? Or will some pretend to immediate inspiration, and, under this pretence, claim the right of governing the faith of others? St. Paul, though really inspired and possessed of the knowledge of the whole christian scheme, rejected such an idea: "Not for that we have dominion over your faith." And if he rejected the idea of having dominion over the faith of men, common modesty, one would think, might induce the ordinary ministers of the gospel, and every other christian, to relinquish every such claim.

Under the notion, however, of immediate inspiration, or upon some other pretence equally absurd, many human inventions have been introduced, to supply some supposed defect in the inspired scripture. But, far from answering

any valuable purpose, they have only furnished infidels with an argument against the christian system. They have not preserved "the unity of faith;" but have interrupted the fellowship of christians. Numerous examples might be adduced to confirm the truth of this observation. It is daily verified by the conduct of christians of different speculative sentiments.

But, would all acknowledge the inspired scripture to be an adequate rule of faith, independent on all human inventions, this evil might be prevented; and the disciples of Christ might live together like brethren, and "stand fast in the liberty wherewith he hath made them free."

It will perhaps be said that very few, if any, deny the sufficiency and perfection of scripture, as a rule of faith. All claim scripture authority in support of their own sentiments. But, do they not, virtually, deny that it is an adequate rule for others, when they require them to subscribe a *confession* of faith, which they, or some others, have drawn up in their own language? Is the language of the *schools*, or of human *creeds*, more perfect and determinate, than the language of scripture? If it be, then there must be an imperfection in the inspired writings which does not attend all human compositions. But, to admit this is to lessen the authority of scripture; and, consequently, its influence upon the minds of men. If we once depart from the scripture, as a rule of christian faith and duty, "to whom shall we go?" Hath any other "the words of eternal life?" Shall we bow to his Holiness; shall we receive the *dogmas* of

Councils and Synods; or shall we look and expect to find among ourselves an infallible Interpreter, to whose superior wisdom we must sacrifice our own understanding? The thought is too unreasonable to be admitted in the present enlightened age. Mankind have learnt to pay some respect to their own understanding; and to believe there is some truth in St. Paul's declaration that "the scriptures are able to make them wise unto salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus."

Certain it is that they express religious sentiments with great perspicuity and energy. Changing the expression often enervates the force, and conceals the beauty, of the sentiment. As in the essential doctrines of christianity, so in the language by which they are communicated, there is a beauty and perfection in scripture; and he, who is disposed to do the will of God, "shall know of the doctrine" whence it is.

A belief in doctrines, which are not clearly expressed, nor easily known, is not, in my apprehension, essential to salvation; and ought not, therefore, to be deemed necessary to the faith and character of a christian: And consequently, that the want of it cannot, in justice, exclude a person from the privileges of the gospel, the communion of the saints, nor the charity of his fellow servants.

From the scriptures we gain the knowledge of many truths which are not expressed in plain and direct terms. But this knowledge is acquired by the exercise of the rational faculties upon plain and evident truths and making deductions. And it cannot, therefore, be so per-

fect, as that which is conveyed directly to the mind by express revelation ; nor can the truths which are the object of it, be supported by so good evidence as those are which are clearly expressed in “ the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth.” For mankind are liable to error in their reasoning upon any subject ; and the evidence of the truth of any conclusion is less in proportion to their liability to error in forming it. This consideration calls for the exercise of modesty and charity ; and it ought to remind us, that, possibly our own sentiments may be erroneous.

But it is, perhaps, true, that many are more tenacious of those sentiments, and more strenuous to support those doctrines, which are founded upon such uncertain conclusions, drawn from some of the darkest and most doubtful passages of scripture, than they are to defend those which are clearly expressed. And too often they consider a belief in such doctrines the highest evidence, if not the only criterion, by which they can judge of the faith, sincerity, and goodness of any person ; and even make it a term of communion and ground of their charity. But this is not arrogating a dominion over the faith of others only, in matters of which they have an absolute and unalienable right to judge for themselves ; but it is in effect lessening the credit and authority of scripture. For, it is requiring men to subscribe, or assent, to articles of faith, which, though in their view deducible from scripture, they would have the world believe, are more properly expressed in the language of their own creed ; which is giving the prefer-

ence to the "words which man's wisdom teacheth." This, contrary to the mind of Christ and to the directions of St. Paul, is derogating from the scripture, and, perhaps, establishing "for doctrines the commandments of men."

As the scriptures contain and express every article of the christian faith, a profession of belief in them is the best confession of faith that any person can make. For he who believes the "scripture is given by inspiration of God," receives all the doctrines of it so far as he is able to understand what they are; especially if he suppose they are expressed in "words which the Holy Ghost teacheth." Changing the mode of expression, and, very probably, the ideas too, by a strong implication charges the scripture with imperfection, as a rule of faith. By such change of expression a complex idea may in part be lost, and the deficiency be supplied by something very foreign from the sense and design of the sacred writers.

These considerations, should have their due weight upon the mind of every christian; and more especially upon the mind of every minister, who ought to remember that he is "set for the defence of the gospel," and that he cannot be true to his trust, when he receives, or imposes, for essential doctrines of christianity, "the commandments of men."

The uncorrupted word of God, like the sun, who is ordained to rule by day, should guide our faith and practice. This is a light, which proceeded from "the Father of lights," and gives to men "instruction in righteousness." It is wisely adapted to their feeble capacity,

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shines into the hearts of those who love God, informs the understanding, and sweetly draws the affections after divine objects. It is the great instrument by which the Spirit of God works upon the hearts of sinners, or builds up the saints in holiness and guides them to happiness. Human inventions may obscure, but can never make this light more perfect. This, in connexion with the influences of the Holy Spirit, is able to guide and preserve us in the path which leads to the heavenly zion. It answers the apostle's description of it; with many it proves to be "the power of God unto salvation;" and it promises immortal glory to every obedient believer.

We may now remark,

IV. That it is particularly from the scripture that the minister is to furnish himself for the important duties of his office.

Good natural abilities, improved by a good education, are indispensably necessary to his acquitting himself with honour and success. A general knowledge of the arts and sciences is peculiarly useful. An acquaintance with human nature, with men and things, gives him great advantage in his work. But religion in his own heart, a love to God and man, must be the animating principle and ruling motive of all his labors. Close application to his study and earnestness in his addresses are to evidence his sincerity and fidelity. But his faithfulness will chiefly be discovered in his unremitting attention to the scripture, as the rule of his own faith, temper, and conduct; and as his directory in every part of ministerial duty. From

this treasure of wisdom and knowledge he is to complete the furniture of his mind. This "is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." It is from the scripture only, as an unerring standard, that he is to learn the peculiar doctrines, hopes, and duties, of christianity. By this he discovers the origin of human misery; and from this learns, that man, though made at first after the image of the Creator, hath apostatized from God, and thereby obscured the hopes of nature. In this he sees the evil of sin, and its deplorable consequences, marked out with precision. And, while deeply affected with the view of man in his guilt, exposed to the penalties of the divine law, he beholds, to his inexpressible joy, "the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world;" and learns that Christ, "having made peace by the blood of his cross," is become "an advocate with the Father" for the guilty children of men; and that God is by him "reconciling the world unto himself." Here he finds the terms of the sinner's final acceptance and salvation, and discovers the duties and obligations, which result from a dispensation of grace.

From this treasure he is to derive the most important information; to gain a knowledge of the manifold works and wisdom of God, of the divine perfections and their harmony in the government of the world, and in the redemption of man.

Here "life and immortality are brought to light;" and here he sees the religion of nature explained and enforced by divine sanctions; learns its deficiency, and finds this deficiency happily supplied by the wisdom and grace of God, shining with a glorious lustre in the face of his Son Jesus Christ. From the scripture he is to learn the character and offices of the Saviour, the merit of his obedience and sufferings, and the hopes which are to be built upon his mediation.

The scripture contains his commission to "go and teach; baptizing in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;" and all the peculiar doctrines, which, as a minister of Christ, he must preach unto men. It informs him what to preach, how to preach, and how to rule and "behave himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God." It contains "the whole counsel of God," which duty and faithfulness to the Redeemer, as well as to the souls of men, oblige him to declare. Here then he is to look for subjects suited to the times and seasons, and to the particular state of his flock. "Doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness," are to be derived from this pure fountain; and motives collected to engage the attention and command the obedience of the heart.

It may not be improper to hint at some of the leading doctrines of the gospel. Among these, according to my apprehension, is the doctrine of human depravity, of salvation "by grace through faith," of "repentance towards

God," of regeneration, of the agency of the spirit in the conversion of a sinner, of the resurrection of the dead, of a future judgment, of the eternal glory and felicity of the saints, and of the punishment of the finally impenitent. These, and many others calculated to interest the feelings, raise the hopes, and arrest the attention of mankind, are taught in the holy oracles.

Whence, but from the scripture, can the minister learn these doctrines, or understand the design and duties of his office? And how illy does he answer his character, if he do not imbibe the spirit, and preach the truths, of the gospel. This is the measure and rule of his duty; and the perfection of his ministerial character is a strict conformity to it. If he conform to this rule he will "in doctrine shew uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity;" and use "sound speech, which cannot be condemned," but will promote the edification of his hearers.

Moreover, the scripture affords the minister the noblest examples to excite his zeal and fidelity in the arduous work to which he hath devoted himself; and the most gracious promises to comfort and support him in the difficulties and trials peculiar to his station and sacred employment.

Would he know how he ought to feel interested and engaged to advance the glory of God and the salvation of sinners; let him look into the history of Christ, the purchaser of our redemption, and see him dying on the accursed tree, that he might do honour to his and our God, and expiate human guilt. And if he

think this an example, which it is neither possible, nor expected, that he should copy; let him turn his thoughts to St. Paul, who could say, "neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus." If he feel human weakness, and that he is insufficient for the great work, let him attend to the kind promise of Christ to his ministers, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

As a constant motive to be diligent and faithful, let him remember, it is promised, that "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever."

Though his labors should not be attended with desired success, let him encourage himself with the assurance that "though Israel be not gathered, yet he shall be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and his God will be his strength;" that, if faithful, though unsuccessful, he shall receive a crown of rejoicing at the second appearing of the Lord Jesus.

Thus does the scripture furnish the man of God unto all good works. It therefore demands his serious attention and daily study. Let this be his directory, and he will be "a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word," and happily fulfilling "the ministry which he hath received from the Lord."

Omitting particular inferences from what hath been said,

Let me rely on the candor of my fathers and brethren in the ministry, who are "set for the

defence of the gospel," while I felicitate them and myself, upon the reflection that we have in our hands an unerring standard of religious truth, which not only teaches us knowledge, and points out our duty, but affords the noblest encouragement and highest motives to be faithful in it. Happy are the eyes that see this heavenly light! Let us rejoice in it, and endeavour to reflect the purest rays of it upon the minds of our respective hearers.

By the inspired scripture let us try our own sentiments, and receive nothing for doctrines of christianity, which will not bear the test; how much soever it may be sanctified by great names, or ecclesiastical decrees. Let us be equally careful to "call no man father upon the earth," and not to allow ourselves to be "called masters; for one is our master, even Christ."

In matters of faith let us neither yield subjection, nor claim dominion. I humbly conceive we are not required to do the one, nor permitted to do the other. Let us acknowledge no other rule of faith, than that, which Christ and his apostles have given us.

And may we feel that "the word of God is quick and powerful;" that it arrests our attention and inspires us with zeal for the divine glory, and the deliverance of souls captivated by sin. While we pay all due respect to the holy scripture, and study to know what it contains, let us encourage others to examine for themselves, and extend towards them our charity, though they should differ from us in the interpretation of some parts of the divine word.

If sincere, all will agree in the essentials, and ought always to agree in affection and christian fellowship. In our life and conversation, as well as in the particular duties of our office, let us exhibit the spirit and power of the gospel.

And may the God whom we serve quicken us by his grace, crown our labours with success, and give us many seals of our ministry, which shall be our crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord.

My young friend, at whose request I have taken this part on the present solemn and joyful occasion, demands my particular attention.

You, *dear Sir*, are now entering upon an honorable, but arduous work; a work in which the glory of God, the interest of the Redeemer's kingdom, and the salvation of men, are particularly concerned.

On your faithfulness and diligence in this sacred work will depend the approbation of God and your future crown of rejoicing.

You have heard the character and qualifications of a gospel minister briefly hinted. My knowledge of you, from long acquaintance, forbids me to entertain a doubt of the purity of your motives and intentions. Your conscience, I am persuaded, now bears witness to the sincerity of your heart, and fixed resolution to be faithful; as all, who have the happiness of an acquaintance with you, must to your ability to teach.

When providence gave to me the direction of your early studies, and the inspection of your general deportment, the seriousness I then observed in you was to me a presage of your one

day entering, with your whole heart, upon the work of the ministry. You do not disappoint my expectation. You now, I trust, sincerely devote yourself and all your talents to the sacred work. I most sincerely rejoice in your fair prospect of comfort and usefulness. The united voice of this large and respectable church and society hath called you to be over them in the Lord. You now take the oversight of them, "not by constraint, but willingly." And you will, I trust, "watch, as they that must give account" to the great Head of the church. All your abilities must be devoted to the honor and service of your Lord, and to the good of this people.

To the holy scripture you must look for direction; and to the grace of God for quickening and support.

It is a pleasing reflection, "that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures," and appeared to be governed by the divine maxims, which they contain. Make them the rule of your faith, of your preaching, and other ministerial duty. Be "mighty in the scriptures," that you may come to this people "in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ."

You will not reject any doctrine of the inspired scripture, because you may not be able fully to comprehend it; but will readily believe "the record which God hath given of his Son," and examine the lively oracles "for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

As a faithful servant of Christ, concerned for the "sheep and the lambs" of the flock, you

will “declare the whole counsel of God,” and be careful to feed them with “the sincere milk of the word.” You will avoid matters “of doubtful disputation, foolish and unlearned questions, which minister strife, rather than godly edifying ;” and will be serious, practical, and evangelical, in your preaching. And you will endeavour to bring the great truths of the gospel home to the hearts and consciences of your hearers, and to enforce them by your own example. Precepts teach, but examples enforce the truth, and influence the life.

You will consider it an honour to your christian character and profession, to manifest candor and charity towards all your fellow-servants, who exhibit the life and temper of christians, though in some things they should differ from you in sentiment. “Charity is the bond of perfectness.”

You will not be governed by the pride of opinion, but always keep your mind open to light and conviction ; and never be ashamed of any of the truths of the gospel, though they should be unpopular with the multitude. Respect your own understanding, knowing that it was given by the *inspiration of the Almighty*, and cannot innocently be disregarded, or controlled by the authority of others in religious sentiments.

Let prudence, sincerity, and faithfulness, mark your character. Be zealous in the noble cause in which you now engage. Preserve, if possible, the affection of this respectable people, and give them full proof, that you love them, not in word only, but in truth and sincerity.

Mutual esteem and affection will lighten your burden and make your service delightful.

If in a view of the arduous work before you, and of the difficulties that attend the faithful performance of it, and under the concern you must feel at entering upon it, you are ready to say, "who is sufficient for these things?" remember your master hath said: "My grace is sufficient for thee." "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

Set the examples of the suffering Jesus before you, and have an eye to "the recompense of reward," that you may be encouraged faithfully to fulfil your ministry. Anticipate the day, when those, whom you may turn to righteousness, shall, in the presence of an assembled world, own the riches of God's goodness to them, in giving you to be their spiritual guide; and with you enter into that *rest, which remaineth to the people of God.*

Think no service too great for you to perform, to promote the glory of God, to build up Christ's kingdom in this place, and to save the souls of this people. Plead for them at the throne of grace, faithfully deliver to them the word of God, and, by your own example, lead them in the way of righteousness.

And may God grant you a long, a prosperous, and a successful ministry.

May you be a man, whom Christ, the glorious Head of the church, shall delight to honor in this golden candlestick. And when he shall come to collect his saints, may you, and the people of your charge, be received into his everlasting kingdom.

The christian church and society in this place now claim my respectful attention.

Friends beloved in the Lord,

We rejoice with you on this auspicious day, that the great Head of the church is giving you a minister of his gospel, who is able to feed you with knowledge, and who, we believe, will be faithful to his Lord, and to you.

We remember, and would mention to your honor, the christian temper you manifested, when, by mutual consent, the pastoral relation between you and your late *worthy minister*,* was dissolved.

It is to us a pleasing reflection, that you did then and do still hold him in reputation and honor among you. He hath ever had an uninterrupted share in our affection and esteem; and now hath our sincere respect, and cordial wishes for his health, prosperity, and happiness.

Your steady zeal and unremitted exertions to have the gospel resettled among you, your great unanimity in the choice of your *Pastor elect*, and your generous provision for his comfortable support, rise into view on this joyful occasion, afford peculiar satisfaction, and presage his eminent usefulness among you, and your future prosperity, edification, and comfort.

Behold the man of your choice, this day, devoting himself, his time, and his talents, to the service of God, and of your souls.

* The Rev. Moses Everett. He was ordained *Pastor* of the church and society in Dorchester, September 28, 1774. By reason of ill health he was induced to ask a dismissal; to which the church and people, after expressing their kindness to him and duly weighing the matter, consented. The business was completed and the relation dissolved January 14, 1793. He now lives among them a private gentleman and christian much respected and esteemed.

Receive him as an *ascension gift*, and “esteem him highly in love for his work’s sake.” His abilities are unquestionable; his character is irreproachable; his virtues have been conspicuous; his temper and deportment are agreeable; and by literary improvements he hath distinguished himself. From long and particular acquaintance with him I am led to believe, that he is actuated by pure and worthy motives in entering into the work of the ministry.

You have heard whence he is to collect the “doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness,” which he is to preach and administer, viz. from the *inspired scripture*. Consider, therefore, that he brings to you the messages of heaven; and “take heed how you hear.” Examine and judge for yourselves. He, I presume, will not claim dominion over your faith; but strive to be a “helper of your joy.” Seriously attend upon his ministry, and endeavour to profit under it. Treat him with candor, tenderness, and affection. Do not increase, but as far as possible lighten his burden.

The labors and duties of a minister, among this large people, must be great. But you, my christian friends, may make them supportable by your candor and generous thoughtfulness of the extensive field, in which he is called to employ his time. Do not expect more from him, than is in his power to perform. Remember that his study will engross a considerable portion of his time; and let him see that you are pleased with his giving himself to study, to reading, and to meditation. In these he will labor for your profiting.

I am persuaded you will find in him an agreeable seriousness, a laudable zeal for the glory of God, a sincere desire to promote your happiness, and a heart full of tenderness. He will feel for you, and sympathize with you, in all your distresses; and you, I hope, will manifest the kindest feelings and affections to him.

I trust that by the help of divine grace he will be faithful. Much depends on you whether he shall be successful. Do not deprive him of this joy, the greatest and most animating a sincere and good minister can have, by any neglect on your part. Give him no occasion to complain, that he "labours in vain." Receive the truth in the love of it, and let "your profiting appear unto all men." By this you will encourage as well as comfort your minister. Let him always have an interest in your fervent prayers and devout supplications at the throne of grace, and in your undissembled love.

May your love and his be mutual; may your kind offices and his be reciprocal; may your joy and his be lasting. And long may he be a rich blessing to you; and may your children rise up to bless this servant of the Lord, and to glorify God for giving him to be their spiritual father and guide. And, when these humbler forms of worship shall be done away, may you all, with your beloved pastor, join "the general assembly and church of the first born, which is written in heaven," for ever to celebrate the praises of God, and the riches of redeeming grace.

I shall now close with a few words to this numerous and respectable assembly.

You have heard, my friends, that the doctrines which your respective ministers are bound to preach and to teach, were revealed from heaven ; that the *scripture*, which contains them, is *given by inspiration of God*. Can it then be a matter of indifference, whether you hear and attend to them or not ? Messages from heaven to mortals on earth must not only be worthy of their attention, but demand their serious regard.

Did Christ come into the world, to reveal his Father's will, and to die upon the cross that he might redeem your souls ; and are you under no obligation to receive his gospel, and honor him by your faith and obedience ? This cannot be. Gratitude demands a different return. Besides, your own souls are deeply interested in the messages delivered from the word of God. Be persuaded, therefore, my friends, to attend to them with seriousness. " Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God ;" and by faith men are justified in the sight of God. " Take heed, therefore, how ye hear." " By the foolishness of preaching" some are saved ; made wise, willing, and obedient to the gospel of Christ, and for ever happy in the favour of God.

Let me entreat you, therefore, to attend to the means of grace, to honor, and delight in, a preached gospel. In this way you will encourage the hearts, and strengthen the hands, of your ministers ; and promote your own edification and comfort.

May you all be faithful to God, and to your own souls ; and may you " taste that the Lord


is gracious, desire the sincere milk of the word, grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," and be fruitful in works of righteousness, which shall be to "the praise and glory of God the Father."

Thus may we all be happy here in the love and favor of God, and in the approving testimony of our own consciences. And, when the Lord Jesus shall descend from "the right hand of the Majesty on high," to judge and award men "according to the deeds done in the body," may we, with exulting hearts, hear his voice pronouncing to each of us: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

A M E N.

T H E
C H A R G E,

GIVEN BY THE
REV. NATHANIEL ROBBINS,
OF M I L T O N.



WHEREAS it hath pleased the only living and true God, by whose perfect providence the world is governed, who is the universal Proprietor and Lord, to raise up and qualify you, Mr. Thaddeus Mason Harris, (in our apprehension) for the work of the Gospel Ministry, and to incline and call you thereto; and since you are, in divine providence, invited, this church of Christ and the congregation of the Lord, usually meeting for public worship in this house, to the work of the gospel ministry among them: We, who now lay our hands on you, do, in the name of the glorious Head of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ, and by a power derived from him, separate you, Mr. Thaddeus Mason Harris, to this sacred service, and ordain you a pastor of the church and congregation in Dorchester, which we now commit to your pastoral care.

And we charge you, as in the presence of the great God, the holy angels, and witnesses here

present, that you carefully attend to this sacred service in which you have now engaged: that you so watch for souls as to be able one day to give an account to the Judge of quick and dead with joy and not with grief.

Feed the flock of God, of which the Holy Ghost hath made you an overseer, both the sheep and the lambs of it, with spiritual food. And, in order hereunto, you must preach the word; be instant in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering.

As you are called to be a teacher, you are to endeavour to teach this people all things which Christ has commanded, and as his ambassador. If you can, satisfy this people that you have the interest of his kingdom at heart. Be concerned to approve yourself to God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. Shun not to declare the whole counsel of God through fear of men. Contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. Let no man despise your youth.

And, as you are now authorized to administer the seals of the covenant, baptism and the Lord's supper, so we charge you in the administration of them to adhere closely to the institution: to administer them to all proper subjects, and to no others.

And, as you now have power to ordain and separate others to the work of the gospel ministry when called thereto, so, with respect to the exercise of this power, we charge you to commit this trust to faithful men only, to such as are able to teach others; not to novices, not

to ignorant and unlearned men, lest, being puffed up with pride, they fall into the condemnation of the devil.

And, as you now have to manage that ecclesiastical discipline which Christ has appointed in his church for edification and not for destruction, so we charge you to do it with fidelity to your great Master in heaven. Keep thyself pure from the blood of all men. Mr. Harris, you must be a man of prayer; and an example to the flock, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith and purity. It is evidently of importance that you be a pattern of good works in order to your answering the great end of the ministry. Take heed that you give no offence, that the ministry be not blamed. So take heed to thyself, and to the manner of interpreting and inculcating the truths and rules of the gospel, that so you may save yourself and them that hear you. Be concerned at all times to be instrumental in advancing the glory of God and the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom in your own heart and in the hearts of others. If possible, prevail with sinners to comply with the methods of divine grace that they may finally obtain immortal felicity.

And, if you duly observe this charge, when Christ, who is our life shall appear you shall appear with him, and shine with distinguished lustre in the firmament of glory.

A M E N.

THE
RIGHT HAND of *FELLOWSHIP*,

BY THE
REVEREND MR. H A V E N,
OF D E D H A M.

Men, Brethren and Fathers, hearken.

THAT “God is love, and that he who dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him,” is the declaration of an inspired apostle. Innumerable are the displays of God’s love to the children of men, but none more clear and bright than the gift of his own Son, to redeem and save us. The religion which he introduced, greatly resembles its benevolent Author; it proclaims “peace on earth and good will to men.” Our love to one another is the distinguishing mark by which our real acquaintance with this religion is to be evinced. “By this shall men know that ye are my disciples if ye have love one to another.”

May it not be expected that the ministers of this religion, should shine with distinguished lustre in this amiable grace? Is not this one among many things, in which they should be “examples to the flock of Christ?” How

many endearing considerations must daily arise in their minds to cement their affections, not only to those who are their brethren, in the faith and hope of the gospel, but particularly to those who are their brethren in office, and their "fellow-helpers to the truth!" How should their hearts be knit together in love! And how gladly should they embrace every method, and every opportunity to express their kind and sympathetic feelings to each other!

It is not necessary to determine whether *giving each other the hand*, is a natural expression of friendship and affection, or whether long usage hath strongly stamped this meaning and significancy upon it. In this view, do we not daily observe it in others, and practise it ourselves, in civil intercourse with friends.

And this significant rite, we find, was adopted into religion, in the early days of christianity. "When *James, Cephas, and John*, who seemed to be pillars in the church of Christ, perceived the grace of God in *Paul and Barnabas*, they gave unto them the right hand of fellowship."

The congregational churches, in our land, ambitious of approaching as near as may be to the model of the truly primitive and apostolic church, have ever accompanied the solemn ordination of a pastor, with this pleasing rite.

Accordingly, being authorized, by long usage and ancient example, and designated to this agreeable service, by the ecclesiastical council here present, I give unto you, my brother, THIS RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP. Hereby I express my own, and the affectionate feelings of the Elders of the churches here convened to-

wards you. We hereby testify our satisfaction in your qualifications, for the great work to which you have now been solemnly separated. We bid you welcome into the gospel vineyard, as our "companion and fellow laborer in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ." We promise you our ready advice and brotherly assistance, whenever you may have occasion for them. Of this my hand is a pledge.

Permit me, at the same time, to remind you, that this action, like the obligations it expresses, is mutual. I have received your hand, which we view as a token of your friendship and affection to us ; and an engagement, on your part, to perform all those kind and brotherly offices towards us, of which we may at any time stand in need.

The honor of our divine Master ; the success of his service, in our hands ; the interest of the churches confided to our care ; and our own support under the temptations and discouragements which attend our sacred employment ; all render mutual love and affection between the ministers of Christ highly necessary. May this brotherly love continue and increase ! May nothing dissolve or weaken this happy union !

And now, dear brother, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirits ! May God prolong your life, and render it precious to the people of your charge. May "the ear that hears you bless you, and the eye that sees you bear witness to you." May "he who holdeth the stars in his right hand," support and guide

you, through a long and shining course of personal sanctity, and public usefulness; and having made you instrumental of turning many of your people to righteousness, advance you “to shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as a star for ever and ever.”

Beloved friends and brethren of the christian church and society, in this town, we, the elders and messengers of your sister churches, whom you have invited hither, on the present solemn and joyful occasion, “salute you much in the Lord.” We affectionately recognize you, as a valuable member of the body of Christ, our common head; and as becomes this endearing relation, we feel ourselves united to you, in the bonds of cordial love and fellowship.

We take a pleasing and sympathetic part in the satisfaction which this day’s prospect affords you. We rejoice in the happy unanimity with which you have chosen our worthy and beloved young brother, to take the pastoral care and charge of you. With religious pleasure we have joined with you, in the solemnity of his induction into the work of the gospel ministry. Behold the man whom you have seen, this day, devoting himself, his time, and talents, to the service of your souls, with all the marks of tender affection to you, and of humble obedience to the great Shepherd, appointing him, here “to feed his sheep—to feed his lambs.”

May mutual affection, between you and him, continue and increase, and ever be accompanied with the most substantial evidences of the success of his labors among you. Long may you,

and the children yet to be born, rejoice in the light of his doctrine and pious conversation! And may you and they be his joy and crown of rejoicing, in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming.

A M E N.

23 JAN 68

